



Sister by Chai Yee Wei

What do you need to know?

Singapore has the second highest prisoners-per-population rate in Southeast Asia, second to Thailand with a rate of 526 per 100,000. (World Prison Brief, 2017).

Since 1998, the Singapore Prisons Service (SPS) has moved beyond its custodial function, towards the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-offenders as responsible citizens.¹ The rehabilitation process includes teaching offenders core skills (eg: stress management), offering work and vocational training, and religious services.²

Faith-based groups have historically played an important role in rehabilitation efforts, due to the official view that religion can be a powerful way to change an inmate's thinking and behaviour.³

Why should you care?

It is easy to believe that prisoners deserve the harshest treatment. While the role of prison as a deterrence is important, rehabilitation and reintegration work is also critical to ensure inmates don't re-offend. Historically, a "revolving door" of offenders led to overcrowded prisons and a strain on Singapore's resources.⁴ Ex-offenders who persist in a life of crime also remain a threat to society.

Finally, a good rehabilitation process can maximise the potential of inmates and transform them into responsible persons.

The SPS's shift toward a rehabilitation model is thought to have contributed to a decline in Singapore's recidivism rate from 44.4% in 1998 to 27.4 per cent in 2011.⁵ That said, the recidivism rate today is not insignificant, with roughly 1 out of 4 ex-offenders being re-admitted into prison within two years of their release.⁶

Finally, it is important to ensure society remains open to the idea that ex-offenders can change for the better. As the Yellow Ribbon Project states, stigmatising attitudes are akin to a "second prison" and can complicate the rehabilitation and reintegration process.

¹ Civil Service College. [Case Study: Toward a Society Without Reoffending](#).

² [Singapore Prison Service](#)

³ The Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association. [Community-based Approaches to the Prevention, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Drug Offenders](#).

⁴ Civil Service College. [Case Study: Toward a Society Without Reoffending](#).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ [Data.gov.sg](#)

Where is help available?

The Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders (CARE) Network, set up by the SPS, coordinates the efforts of various voluntary welfare organisations and community agencies that provide after-care support for ex-offenders.

Fei Yue, Lutheran Community Services, The Salvation Army, The New Charis Mission and Awful Grace all have programmes that help with both in-care and after-care support for inmates and their families.

Faith-based organisations play an important role in rehabilitation and reintegration. According to the Singapore Prison Service, there are five major faith-based organisations operating in the prisons: Prison Fellowship Singapore; Singapore Buddhist Federation; Roman Catholic Prison Ministry; Darul Ghufran Mosque; and Sikh Welfare Council.

How can you help?

Be a Donor

The 70 x 7 initiative by Prison Fellowship Singapore reaches out to 150 inmates annually through their victim empathy programme to help put offenders on the path towards community restoration. Support 70 x 7 on [giving.sg](#).

Be a Volunteer

70 x 7 provides frequent volunteering opportunities to volunteers. They require daily help from volunteers on Victim Empathy Programme. Volunteer for the cause at [giving.sg](#).

Be an Advocate

Help to spread awareness about the transformative potential of the prisoner rehabilitation process. Host a screening of Sister with your friends, colleagues, and families.

Be a 15 Shorts ambassador, visit [www.15shorts.com](#).